

CONSTRUCTION AND CRITICISM

By JOHN DEWEY



THE FIRST DAVIES MEMORIAL LECTURE

DELIVERED FEBRUARY 25, 1930

FOR THE INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

*Miss Iva Kiure
Teachers College
Teaching^{3rd} Supervision of Art. Room.*

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MY SUBJECT this evening sounds rather high-brow, and I fear my treatment of it will not get down to concrete matters as much as is desirable. I have used the word construction rather than creation because it seems less pretentious. But what I mean by it is the creative mind, the mind that is genuinely productive in its operations. We are given to associating creative mind with persons regarded as rare and unique, like geniuses. But every individual is in his own way unique. Each one experiences life from a different angle than anybody else, and consequently has something distinctive to give others if he can turn his experiences into ideas and pass them on to others. Each individual that comes into the world is a new beginning; the universe itself is, as it were, taking a fresh start in him and trying to do something, even if on a small scale, that it has never done before. I have always been struck by the interest taken in small children, in their doings and sayings. Discount as much as we will the doting fondness of relatives, yet there is something left over. This something is, I believe, the recognition of originality; a response to the fact that these children who appeal so much to their family and friends bring something fresh into the world, a new way of looking at it, a new way of feeling it. And the interest in this freshness is also a sign of something else. It indicates that adults are looking precisely for something distinctive of individuality. They are sick of constant repetition and duplication, of opinions that are stereotyped and emotions

that are pale stencils of something that someone else has once experienced.

When I think of this fresh reaction of little children to the world, I am led to ask why it so soon gets dimmed; why it gets so soon covered up and a kind of mental rubber stamp or phonograph record takes its place. It may be thought absurd to demand originality of everyone. But I think this idea of absurdity is due to having a wrong measure by which to judge originality. It is not to be measured by its outer product; it is rather an individual way of approaching a world that is common to us all. An individual is not original merely when he gives to the world some discovery that has never been made before. Every time he really makes a discovery, even if thousands of persons have made similar ones before, he is original. The value of a discovery in the mental life of an individual is the contribution it makes to a creatively active mind; it does not depend upon no one's ever having thought of the same idea before. If it is sincere and straightforward, if it is new and fresh to me or to you, it is original in quality, even if others have already made the same discovery. The point is that it be first-hand, not taken second-hand from another.

Mr. Crothers has told in his delightful way of a man in a Massachusetts village who climbed a tree to get a new view and who came down and announced that he had seen the Pacific Ocean. He had observed as a matter of fact a pond in a neighboring town. But what of that? Mr. Crothers went on to say. He had the will of discovery, and if only the Pacific Ocean had been accommodating enough to be there, he would have seen it.

The anecdote suggests something else. This New Englander was evidently what other New Englanders call a "character." Such men were more often found in our pioneer days than they are now. Our forefathers were constantly moving on. Many of them moved on physically. Their migrations and new settlements created a constantly expanding frontier and horizon. But even those who stayed in one place always found, as long as pioneer days existed, something new to do. There was some forest to cut down to make way for grain fields; there were houses and fences to put up, and with their own hands; there were all the household articles and clothing to be made at home; skins to be tanned, soap to be manufactured, candles to be dipped, and so on in almost endless variety. They did not live in a ready-made world, but in a world they were themselves making. They had no Woolworth and chain stores to draw upon. If they wanted schools and churches they had to produce them. Versatility and inventiveness, ready adaptation to new conditions, minds of courage and fertility in facing obstacles, were the result. Original work was once done in politics and government in this country because there were so many minds trained to dealing with unprecedented conditions in daily life. Men were not then afraid to experiment and improvise; they had to do these things in order not to be overwhelmed by alien forces.

I doubt if any social change has taken place in any country at any time as great as that marked by the disappearance of the pioneer in the last fifty years. Perhaps the most striking idea evolved in the interpretation of the history of the United States is the importance of the frontier. But the frontier has virtually disappeared, and with it has disap-

peared the pioneer. We still move about a great deal, but we do it in ready-made motor and Pullman cars, and we go to places that are similar in habits of mind and feeling to the places which we have left; where people get the same news in their papers, read the same best sellers, and listen to the same music and talks, including advertisements of the same ready-made goods, over the radio.

I am old enough to have known and talked with some of these pioneers. I recall one who went from New York when a boy with his family who were looking for new territory to conquer. He went to Michigan, then a wilderness, and became a fur trader in the north, lived with Chippewa Indians and was adopted as a member of their tribe, later becoming a millwright and farmer, and as civilization closed in around him went west in advance of the railway and shot buffaloes; after he was seventy he went gold hunting in Colorado and lived in a mining camp ten thousand feet above the sea. His life was a true American Odyssey, and there were thousands like him.

In the last few months I have read a diary of my great-grandfather, who only a little more than a hundred years ago moved with his family to a portion of Vermont which was then a virtual wilderness; there they founded a school and a church, built a gristmill and saw-mill, and started a store. While still hardly more than a boy he drove cattle on foot to Boston. I do not refer to these incidents because there is anything especially unusual about them, but rather because they are typical of what was going on a hundred years ago, and because it goes beyond the limits of imagination to appreciate the tremendous change in habits of thought and emotion that has taken place in

this same short time along with the changes in outer conditions. We have passed in less than a hundred years from a pioneer civilization to the most highly industrialized civilization on earth, where the ready-made and the readily accessible without individual creative effort abound more than anywhere else in the world. Where on earth and in what period of time can you find such a change?

We realize, albeit somewhat dimly, the outward change that has taken place; dimly, because we are so completely surrounded with what now exists and so absorbed in it that it is about as hard to form a realistic picture of what has vanished as it is upon a cold day in winter to form a vivid sense of the heat of summer. But when we pride ourselves upon the extent of this physical change and our subduing of the wilderness, and succeed in forming a picture of it, we are still likely to forget the significance and scope of the psychological change, the change in mental and moral attitudes, that has taken place. So I repeat we have come from a civilization where everything was still to do, and men's minds were everywhere provoked and incited by the imperious need to create and produce, into a world where things are made for us; where energy is spent in making things that some unknown person is going to use in some remote part of the country, and then in buying and using things that some other unknown person has produced by mechanical means in some far-away and unknown corner. We have passed, so to speak, from a face-to-face contact with nature to a contact with the results of machines and artifice; from a world, social and physical, that was in process of making to one that is for most of us made; and hence from a world that was a constant stimulus to some kind of originality and inventive-

ness to one that puts a premium upon receptivity and reduplication.

I am not, I hope, referring to this difference in order to adopt the too easy habit of old age and sing the praise of a bygone age, lamenting the good old days of yore. There was too much that was harsh and crude in the old conditions to indulge in immoderate idealization; we have thousands of advantages unknown to our forbears. But the tremendous change raises a question. How shall we today under our conditions develop the same independence and initiative of mind with respect to our problems that they were forced to evolve in the face of their problems?

I shall not take a long time in which to speak of the particular difficulties we experience. A large scale machine production and distribution tends to produce homogeneity just as it tends to produce the urbanization of population out of once scattered rural villages. As Bertrand Russell has recently pointed out in an article called "Homogeneous America," even the farmer who lives in comparative physical isolation produces with machines and for a distant market, and these facts tend to assimilate his mental habits to those of others. The mechanics of news gathering and circulation generate a common mental diet. The leveling of classes has resulted in a definite uniformity of garb very different from the distinctive attire of localities and classes found in the less industrialized portions of Europe. This similarity is the outward counterpart and symbol of the forces that make for mental uniformity and that tend to stifle mental independence. I do not suggest that these conditions are at all fatal to the creative mind. But they render it a deliberate aim, something to be sedulously cultivated,

instead of its being a kind of by-product of social conditions as it once was.

As I have referred to the young as evidence that a certain originality of mental attitude is a spontaneous trait of human individuals, so I must now refer to education as one great force that may either preserve and propagate this attitude or that may slowly and surely choke it. Education is one of the great opportunities for present day pioneering. It is also one of the fields which is hedged about with greatest difficulties. Our forefathers, to return to them for the moment, could afford to be traditionalists in their schools; they almost had to be in order not to lose contact with the older heritage of culture because of their physical remoteness from its sources. And they got education of another sort in their daily lives and their practical contacts. To a considerable extent, notwithstanding changes in schools that seem revolutionary when we take them en masse, we have retained much of their traditionalism, in spite of the losses in other directions of opportunities for manifesting inventiveness and initiative.

The bare fact that a child goes to school in order to learn tends to make learning a synonym for taking in and reproducing what other persons have already found out. Ready-made materials in material things have their oppressive counterpart in ready-made intellectual information and ideas, and education is supposed to consist in a transfer of these goods into the mind. Schools tend to be pipe-lines and delivery wagons. The increase, the rapid and extensive increase, of knowledge enlarges the stock that flows from the storehouses and tanks of learning into the minds of pupils. Packaged goods are as much in vogue intellectually as they

are commercially. The formation of the course of study is largely a matter of doing up bundles of knowledge in sizes appropriate to age and arranging for their serial distribution, each in its proper year, month, and day. In school as in business we pay more attention than used to be done to having the packages look neat and pasting attractive labels upon them. But one like the other comes pre-prepared, with a view to putting the least possible tax on individual powers of digestion.

Our laudable effort at universal education adds to the premium upon the ready-made article and its mechanical transfer. Big buildings and large classes to each teacher mechanize administration and teaching; time seems to be lacking in which students, young or old, may engage in independent and productive intellectual activity. With so much material to deliver in geography, history, literature, the sciences and arts, and so many potential consumers to reach, the outcome is a chain-belt system of systematized mass manufacture. It is not, perhaps, surprising that the efforts of those engaged in what is euphemistically called a science of education aim at setting so-called norms which are only averages of large numbers, or that their ideal is to introduce better order and economy into the distribution and delivery system. A large part of the business of the teachers as of the sellers of commercial products is to break down sales resistance; for the individual mind of the student retains, save in cases of extreme docility, enough of its individuality to wish to play hookey and to escape loading up with the goods offered. Physical truancy is probably diminishing, but the mental truancy known as not paying atten-

tion is still carried on with great success, in spite of the greater attractiveness of the packaged goods.

It is not difficult to list the main traits of a genuinely creative or productive mental activity. They are such things as independence, initiative, and the exercise of discriminating judgment. Unfortunately, it is easier to understand and interpret these in a physical sense than in an intellectual one. Doing as one pleases signifies a release from truly *intellectual* initiative and independence, unless taste has been well developed as to *what* one pleases. Perhaps you have heard the story of the child who in a school that prided itself on its freedom inquired of the teacher, "Do we *have* to do what we want to do today?" The story if not true is at least "well found." It requires a cultivated mind to have significant conscious desires, to know what one really wants. It is easy to take what is suggested in any chance way or by what others are seen to do as what one wants to do, when in reality the so-called want is only a desperate effort to escape from a mental void. In order to obtain genuine independence and initiative of thought a good deal more is required than the label of "progressive," and unless it is *thinking* which is independent and initiating, there is merely undirected bodily activity—which is a long way off from that mental freedom which is a condition of creation. Release of the body, of hand, eye, and ear, from physical conditions that cramp and mechanize is a precondition of more independent thought, but it is only a condition, not the thing itself.

In spite of appearances I am not, however, engaged in giving a lecture on pedagogy. I am only trying to illustrate through the familiar example of the schools a dilemma we

all face, adults out of school as well as children in it. Adults also alternate between mental subjection to routine and unordered physical activity. They also strive to compensate for subjection to tasks of absorption and reproduction by excess aimless mobility. The standardized factory and the automobile racing from nowhere in particular to nowhere else in particular with no special purpose except to get there and back as fast as possible are the Siamese twins of our civilization. The chief difficulty with adults is very much like that from which children suffer in schools. We do not know what we really want and we make no great effort to find out. We, too, allow our purposes and desires to be foisted upon us from without. We, too, are bored by doing what we want to do, because the want has no deep roots in our own judgment of values. There is a vicious circle. We yield to one kind of external pressure in doing what we like just as we yield to another kind in having to do what we don't like. The only difference is that pressure in the latter case is obvious and direct; in the former case it is subtle and indirect.

It is at this point that the part of my title of which I have so far said nothing comes in: Criticism. Criticism, I hardly need point out to this audience, is not fault finding. It is not pointing out evils to be reformed. It is judgment engaged in discriminating among values. It is taking thought as to what is better and worse in any field at any time, with some consciousness of *why* the better is better and *why* the worse is worse. Critical judgment is therefore not the enemy of creative production but its friend and ally. I have heard intelligent persons say that their college education overdeveloped their critical faculties at the expense of their productive capacities. I have heard them envy colleagues who

had escaped the blight of constant exercise of their critical powers, on the ground that the latter were much surer of themselves and possessed of greater confidence in projecting and executing new courses of action.

We can easily understand what these persons mean. We have all seen cases of partial paralysis of powers of action, due apparently to excessive development of powers of thought. Consciousness if not conscience seems to make cowards of us all. Thought makes us aware of many alternative possibilities, and in widening the range of possible choices makes energetic choice difficult. It leads to doubt and hesitation. In becoming critical of values we become uncertain as to whether any value is really worth the effort required to realize it; in thinking of whether there may not be something else more valuable we avoid committing ourselves in action to any chosen good. I cannot agree, however, that the result is due to cultivation of critical ability. It is rather the product of students being swamped with criticisms emanating from other minds. We forget that criticisms exist ready-made as much as anything else, and that absorption of ready-made criticisms is a very different thing from exercise of critical power. I have referred to the case of college students, but the principle applies everywhere.

The primary requisite of critical ability is courage; its great enemy is cowardice, even though it take that mitigated form called intellectual laziness. The easy course is always to accept what is handed out. It not only saves effort but it places responsibility on someone else. I have recently been reading an account of a contact of Gandhi with a Plymouth Brother in South Africa. The latter urged the acceptance

of Christianity upon Gandhi on the ground that it was impossible to live sinless in this world and that consequently unless one accepted the redemptive act performed by another, "life was restless and uncertain in this world of sin." To which Gandhi replied that he was not interested in redemption from the consequences of sin but from sin itself. I do not suppose the statement of the particular missionary in question would be received as authoritative by all Christians. But the incident is worth referring to as evidence of the fact that the transfer of responsibility from self to someone else has found its way into the imagination of multitudes through the gateway of popular religious beliefs.

The same thing has happened in all other fields of belief and action. There are many persons who are busy telling us that democracy is a political failure. In as far as it is a failure, it is because the idea of democracy involves individual responsibility for judgment and choice, while large numbers of men and women refuse to take upon themselves the burden of this responsibility. The account with democratic ideals is still far from being settled. But if it turns out in the end a failure, it will not be because it is too low a doctrine but because it is too high morally for human nature, at least as that human nature is now educated. It is a strenuous doctrine that demands courage of thought and belief for realization.

There is also much condemnation of democracy for its unwillingness to admit experts and expert advice and leadership. Anyone who has followed the history of even New York City politics knows facts that bear out the accusation. But the facts as they first appear only raise a question as to the source of this opposition to experts. And this question

if followed up will lead to the conclusion that the real cause of the objection is not any objection to experts as such, but knowledge of the fact that taking their counsel and directions would involve disturbance of vested corrupt influences. Too many people, as it is, are willing to "let George do it," and would willingly, too willingly, follow in the wake of expert leadership if they were not afraid it would interfere with some private purpose.

Indeed, I should be willing to go so far as to say that we in this country are too submissive to what are termed authorities in different fields, and too little given to questioning their right to speak with authority. It is a common complaint that we are too credulous a people and are only too ready to swallow any bunk if it is offered with the prestige of apparent authority. Advertising pages teem with recommendations of everything from medicines to beds and foods, which are to influence the buying public because they come from someone prominent on the stage, in baseball, or in "society." I heard recently of an instance in which the business manager of an explorer wrote to firms dealing in such articles as the explorer might need to take with him, proposing financial arrangements for future testimonials. We let ourselves off too easily when we attribute this state of affairs to the advertisers. The matter goes back to the uncritical state of popular opinion which makes this kind of publicity effective. We are in a passive and submissive state toward whatever passes as "authority."

I hope the citation of instances does not distract the mind from the main point. They are cited only because of their force as types and illustrations of a general condition of mind: the failure of individuals to exercise personal dis-

crimination—to be critical. This failure has its roots in many cases in lack of the kind of education which prepares for the exercise of independent judgment and choice. But there are many persons intellectually prepared for their exercise who fail from a moral cause—lack of courage first to think and then to think out loud. Surrender of the mind to the clamor of strident publicity would not be particularly important if it were not the symptom of a deeper disease.

If causes were excuses it would be easy to find justification for the prevalence of the submissive, unresisting, because uncritical, mind. We are born infants, dependent upon others. The habit of leaning on others is formed while we are so unconscious that we are not aware of its existence. Few parents and few teachers rejoice in the growing independence of those who are in their charge. There is something flattering to our self-love in having others dependent upon us; unregenerate love of power urges us on to perpetuate that which we think of as authority. Even our altruistic desires, our love of doing things for others, conspire with our wish for prestige and recognition. We forget that the best thing we can do for another is to assist him to stand on his own feet so that he can get along without our assistance. We forget that the companionship, the give and take, of equals is immensely more rewarding than that of inferiors. Power in the shape of command over the thoughts and beliefs of others is a cheap substitute for the power that comes from command of ourselves.

This force, working for the stifling of independent judgment, is constant. It is with us always in the continuous relation of the generations of the young and of the adult.

Those who have been forced into mental and moral subjection when young compensate by the use of extraneous authority when they in turn become the trainers of youth. But there are forces that are especially characteristic of our own age. We are committed to universal schooling. In ensuring the ability to read, we multiply indefinitely the number of external influences that can play upon an individual mind. He who has learned as we call it to read without having learned to judge, discriminate, and choose has given hostages of dependence to powers beyond his control. He has prepared for himself a readiness to undergo new modes of intellectual servitude. Add to this fact the other fact that three-quarters of our school population leave school at the age of fourteen and that their schooling has consisted up to that time mainly in absorption of information and acquisition of modes of skill acquired mainly by mechanical imitation and repetition, and it is not surprising that we have a people given to credulity, apt to be stirred by whatever is urged loudly and repeatedly upon their attention.

The educative or formative force that follows upon that of the school is that of one's occupation and vocation. A relatively small number are privileged to select callings that demand the exercise of personal reflection and understanding. The mass go into shops and factories in which mental submission to conditions and aims in which they do not mentally share is the rule. They may be rebellious to conditions, but they are forced to be obedient to the orders and directions that issue from the machinery they tend. They are servants, employees, not only of other persons but even more of impersonal agencies whose continual mechanical motions they must follow and to which they must accommodate them-

selves. Personal judgment and initiative have no organic place; their exercise would seem to be evidence of overt rebellion. Economic conditions reinforce the work of formal schooling and of much parental guidance in developing the uncritical and passive mind.

Yet human nature was not made for servility. If one looks at law and lawlessness, at order and disorder, in our contemporary scene, nothing would seem more absurd than the assertion that a marked trait of our life is the submissive mind. Complaints of the disappearance of the spirit of obedience, of loyalty to constituted authority and law, are as well based as they are rife. Laws on every conceivable subject are multiplied only to be recklessly broken. Yet there is no contradiction between this phenomenon and the existence of uncritical and uncreative mind. Rather they complement and demand each other. No one can be constantly under the surveillance of a dictator of his thought; an individual released from the period of submission in which he has experienced no cultivation of his own judgment is, at the moment of his release, at the mercy of untrained appetite and impulse, as the pupils subject to the most severe external discipline during school hours are usually the most boisterous and unruly when they escape from the eye and hand of the supervising disciplinarian. Desire may be covered up but it cannot be suppressed, for it is one vital energy. If it is not unified with ideas and directed by judgment it will find a chance outlet.

Creation and criticism are companions. Genuine discrimination is creative because it expresses an original response to what is presented; it is an exercise of personal taste. A good deal of fun has been made of the saying so

often uttered in the presence of paintings: "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like." Nevertheless, the saying expresses the starting point of all critical appreciation. It is only the start, however. For as a rule it is not true. The person saying it does not as a rule *know* what he likes. Knowledge is something more serious than a casual and incidental affection of favor. A passing response of liking is something quite different from an intelligent judgment. The chief trouble with those who say that they know what they like is that it usually implies a certain finality. It too often signifies that this thing which I like is not only good enough for me, but that it will remain so. I do not propose to learn to see anything different or to like in any new way.

Nevertheless, liking itself and a certain trust in one's liking are a good beginning. If the liking proceeds from one's own true nature there is an independent and original activity. I fear, however, that in many cases the liking itself is not primitive and spontaneous. It is a product of earlier conventional education which has given a set to the mind that stifles independent reaction. The preservation of original spontaneity of emotional response is very difficult, and to discover and trust to its subconscious stirrings is even more difficult. I have noticed, for instance, that children not yet influenced by current example and precept have no such difficulty in perceiving and liking many pictures of the so-called modern style as is experienced by adults. What the latter suppose they like is not in fact what *they* like; they have learned through the years what *others* say they like until their own liking has been overlaid with a borrowed standard. To strip away these accretions, to get down to

some deeper and more primitive reaction of emotion and give it a free opportunity to operate, is with most persons the beginning of a genuine liking and appreciation of paintings.

I have referred to painting not so much for its own sake as because the case of pictures seems to exemplify a general principle of fundamental importance. As Emerson says in his essay on "Self-Reliance": "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within," and "Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another."

But it is not easy to detect and watch the gleams of light that flash from within. Education and social surroundings are in a conspiracy to dim these flashes and to attract our watching to other things. Language does not help us at this point; rather the habits of our vocabulary betray us. For the only words we have to designate these original gleams are impression and intuition, and these words have themselves got overlaid with all kinds of conventions and acquired secondary doctrines. To know what the words mean we have to forget the words and become aware of the occasions when some idea truly our own is stirring within us and striving to come to birth. The beginning of all development of individuality with adults usually comes when one learns to throw off an outer slavery to second-hand and

ready-made opinions and begins to detect, watch, and trust one's own intuitions, that is, one's own spontaneous, unforced reactions. And the statement holds good whether originality finds expression in some endeavor at a new construction or in criticism of some scene, whether of nature or of social institutions.

Creation and criticism cannot be separated because they are the rhythm of output and intake, of expiration and inspiration, in our mental breath and spirit. To produce and then to see and judge what we and others have done in order that we may create again is the law of all natural activity. As it is the same bodily mechanism that regulates both the intaking of air and the breathing of it out, so it is the same mind which by its own identity of structure expresses itself in productive action and in critical discrimination. Production that is not followed by criticism becomes a mere gush of impulse; criticism that is not a step to further creation deadens impulse and ends in sterility. As breathing in and breathing out are cooperative manifestations by which life is sustained and carried on, so criticism and creation are connected manifestations of the same psychical life. The more normally one expels air from the lungs, the more, that is, one breathes out in accord with the structure of lungs and diaphragm, the more deeply will one inhale, and the more completely in turn will he exhale. Receptivity and assimilation are as much forms of vital action as are the overt actions that are visible.

Our mental irregularities and troubles come from failure to observe the law of rhythm in creation and criticism. We are not too receptive of impressions, but we are indiscriminate and unselective in our receptions. Passivity is

necessary to receptivity, but we allow the passivity of reception to become converted into passivity of reaction. Hence we are flooded by impressions forced upon us from without, and the outcome is a stagnant pool that permits all kinds of alien things to be thrown in. When we act, we act spasmodically or violently as if in an effort to throw off the very things that should have nourished us but that are only choking us. What should in the normal course of mental life have been a constructive utterance in word or deed becomes a somnolent snore or an aimless splutter, or a plaintive sigh that expresses our inability to cope constructively with what oppresses us. We have neither the wit to permit selected impressions to sink in until they have become truly our own capital to work with, nor the courage to give out with assertive energy—or else the assertion from lack of depth in prior thought becomes hard and dogmatic.

Education is so fundamental in establishing a balance that I have felt some difficulty in preventing this talk from becoming a pedagogical sermon. Partly as an aid in resisting the temptation, I shall conclude with some remarks about the relation of philosophy to criticism and creative action. There are those who look upon philosophy as a revelation of something foreign to everyday experience, or as a key that opens a door to realms otherwise inaccessible which have a supreme and final value. There are those who have once believed they found this ultimate revelation and this powerful key in religion, and who, having been disillusioned there, search in philosophy for what they have missed. When they do not find what they are after, they turn away disappointed or invent a system of fantasy according to their wishes and label it philosophy.

But philosophy is not a special road to something alien to ordinary beliefs, knowledge, action, enjoyment, and suffering. It is rather a criticism, a critical viewing, of just these familiar things. It differs from other criticism only in trying to carry it further and to pursue it methodically. If it has disclosures to offer it is not by way of revelation of some ultimate reality, but as disclosures follow in the way of pushing any investigation of familiar objects beyond the point of previous acquaintance. Men thought before there was logic, and they judged right and wrong, good and evil, before there was ethics. Before there was ever anything termed metaphysics men were familiar with distinctions of the real and the unreal in experience, with the fact that processes whether of physical or human nature have results, and that expected and desired results often do not happen because some process has its path crossed by some other course of events. But there is confusion and conflict, ambiguity and inconsistency, in our experience of familiar objects and in our beliefs and aspirations relating to them. As soon as anyone strives to introduce definiteness, clarity, and order on any broad scale, he enters the road that leads to philosophy. He begins to criticize and to develop criteria of criticism, that is, logic, ethics, esthetics, metaphysics.

I am not concerned at the tail of this evening's talk to elaborate this idea about philosophy. Rather I shall assume it, and ask what is the value of this generalized form of criticism for the release of creative productivity. More definitely, what is the value of criticism as philosophy in our American civilization? The theme is not so remote from what has already been said as might appear. There is a great disparity between a large body of inherited ideas and

ideals and those which grow out of present activities. Almost every discussion of religion and politics going on about us testifies to the reality of this conflict. One can hardly go to an art gallery without seeing a struggle between the old on one hand and modernism and futurism on the other. The conflict reaches into the details of our daily lives. One of the results of the confusion is a common scepticism, cynicism, and disillusionment as to any principles and any aims that look beyond getting personal pleasure and profit out of a tangled scene.

We live, someone has said, in a haphazard mixture of a museum and a laboratory. Now it is certain that we cannot get rid of the laboratory and its consequences, and we cannot by a gesture of dismissal relegate the museum and its specimens to the void. There is the problem of selection, of choice, of discrimination. What are the things in the past that are relevant to our own lives and how shall they be reshaped to be of use? Does anyone suppose that our education, our legal system, and our politics would not take on new life if we could answer this question and apply our answer in practice? Formal philosophy should at least provide a method which may be used in this questioning of what has come to us from the past. But I am more concerned to suggest that there is here indicated a service for criticism that is universal. There is no one among us who is not called upon to face honestly and courageously the equipment of beliefs, religious, political, artistic, economic, that has come to him in all sorts of indirect and uncriticized ways, and to inquire how much of it is validated and verified in present need, opportunity, and application. Each one finds when he makes this search that much is idle lumber and much is an

oppressive burden. Yet we give storeroom to the lumber and we assume the restriction of carrying the burden.

If I do not try to point out just the ways in which creative energy would be freed to operate if we got rid of the lumber and the burden, it is because there is a weightier reason than even the fact that my time is drawing to a close. It is because every individual is in some way original and creative in his very make-up; that is the meaning of individuality. What is most needed is to get rid of what stifles and chokes its manifestation. When the oppressive and artificial load is removed, each will find his own opportunity for positive constructive work in some field. And it is not the extent, the area, of this work that is important as much as its quality and intensity, and the cumulative effect of a multitude of individual creations, no matter how quantitatively limited each is by itself. Creative activity is our great need; but criticism, self-criticism, is the road to its release.

